DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 324 SP 038 737

AUTHOR	Hope, John
TITLE	Course Compression and School Partnership in Pre-Service Primary Teacher Education.
PUB DATE	1999-07-00
NOTE	19p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*College School Cooperation; Educational Change; Elementary Education; Elementary School Teachers; Foreign Countries; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Mentors; *Partnerships in Education; Practicums; Preservice Teacher Education; Student Teachers; Teacher Shortage
IDENTIFIERS	University of Auckland (New Zealand)

ABSTRACT

In response to a serious shortage of elementary school teachers, New Zealand's government introduced competitive contracts for new and established providers to develop initial teacher education programs that could be completed over 12-18 months. The University of Auckland developed a compressed, three-semester, post-graduate program taught in partnership with a consortium of elementary schools over 1 year. The practicum used a continuous placement model. Student teachers attended one school per term for 3 days each week and university lectures for the other 2 days throughout the year. A mentor teacher was selected from each consortium elementary school, accredited at post-graduate level, and released part-time to deliver the school-based practicum component of the program. Mentor teacher duties included conducting in-school seminars, assessing the practicum, and assisting lecturers in planning and delivering university papers. This paper discusses five structural postulates underpinning the university's approach, noting the extent of their acceptance by student teachers and the school community: course compression is possible for mature, motivated graduate student teachers; equal partnership with schools is essential; continuous placement in schools is preferable to block placements; academically qualified school mentors will enhance practicum quality; and student teachers need a range of practicum experiences that provide contact with a range of students. (Contains 23 references.) (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 433 324

COURSE COMPRESSION AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP IN PRE-SERVICE PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION

John Hope

Director of Primary Teacher Education

School of Education

University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019

Auckland

New Zealand

Email: j.hope@auckland.ac.nz

SP038737

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Hope

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

COURSE COMPRESSION AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP IN PRE-SERVICE PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION

Abstract

In response to a serious shortage of primary teachers the New Zealand government introduced competitive contracts for new and established providers to develop initial teacher education programmes which could be completed in a 12 to 18 month timeframe. The University of Auckland reacted by developing a compressed three semester post-graduate programme taught in partnership with a consortium of primary schools over one calendar year.

The practicum was founded on a continuous placement model with student teachers attending one school per term for three days of each week, and university lectures for the other two days, throughout the year.

A mentor teacher was selected from each consortium primary school, accredited at post-graduate level and released part-time to co-ordinate and deliver the school-based practicum component of the programme utilising an associate teacher to host each student teacher. The duties of the mentor teachers included in-school seminars, assessment of the practicum component and assisting lecturers in planning and delivering university papers.

Five structural postulates which underpin the University of Auckland approach are advanced and the extent by which they have been accepted by student teachers and the school community is discussed.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline recent changes to the provision of pre-service teacher education for the primary sector in New Zealand, provide an example of a new approach developed to bridge the theory practice gap, outline the results of an end of course evaluation and propose structural issues that have relevance for teacher educators experiencing similar change.

Recent Changes to Pre-service Teacher Education in New Zealand

During the late 1980's and early 1990's the combined effect of high net immigration and an increase in birth rates across New Zealand produced rapid growth in the primary (elementary) school population, particularly in the larger urban centres. A government mandated reduction in class size to 1:21 in the junior school and 1:28 in the senior school exacerbated the problem. Three and four year Bachelor of Education courses which had been the norm for pre-service teacher education in New Zealand were considered too long to allow a rapid response to the teacher shortage, consequently the government of the day developed two new strategies. An incentive package to encourage teachers from Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada to relocate to New Zealand was launched and in 1996 new regulations were gazetted to allow compressed pre-service courses to be developed.

Essential pre-requisites for official approval of compressed courses included completion within twelve to eighteen months, a student teacher intake at graduate level and approval of the course by the Teacher Registration Board, a government body which controls the registration of teachers in New Zealand. Places in such courses were financed under a contestable annual contract with the Ministry of Education.

In a further regulatory change the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, another government body which approves courses and assesses qualifications, created a unit standards framework which allowed tertiary institutions other than universities to issue degrees. Existing partnerships, such as that between the University of Auckland and the Auckland College of Education to co-teach Bachelor of Education students, now became redundant as the colleges developed their own degree structures within the New Zealand Qualifications Authority framework.

This sudden change provided the University of Auckland with an unique opportunity to respond to the changes by creating a totally new programme, rather than modifying an existing one. In parallel with other providers both state and private, a compressed course for primary student teachers was developed and accepted by the Ministry of Education and Teacher Registration Board.

Overview of The University of Auckland Approach to Teacher Education

High achieving student teachers who had a university degree or diploma were selected by interview, the selection criteria being suitability for teaching, ability to benefit from a compressed course and recommendation by independent referees. The student teachers completed a 21 point, ten paper, three semester course compressed into one calendar year by use of summer schools and a more intensive programme.

The programme was delivered by continuous placement at two sites, university for two days each week and school for three days. During the year the student teachers had four practicum experiences in schools of low, middle and high socioeconomic status and at junior, middle and senior primary level, supplemented by full week placements and a final four week block of full class control. Within the schools student teachers completed observation and professional practice tasks in a home class of students with an associate teacher. A university trained mentor teacher in each school conducted in-school course delivery by seminar and individual support, and also assessed the student teachers' teaching practice.

Practicums were completed in a Consortium of thirty schools selected from over 200 expressions of interest from schools in the greater Auckland region. The schools were selected with several criteria in mind; examples of pedagogical best practice, range of socio-economic levels and a mixture of school types including state/private, immersion classes in Maori language and distinctive school philosophies.

The ten papers included education studies, pedagogy, curriculum and reflective practice, with half of most papers being delivered by mentor teachers in the schools and half by lecturers at the university. The course is premised upon David C. Berliners' (1997) research defining effective teaching supported by New Zealand research (Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993; Alton-Lee, Nuthall & Patrick, 1993). Professional development of mentor teachers and assessment of student teachers' classroom teaching is also based on the Berliner model to ensure a consistent approach to teaching and learning across all course components.

Structural Postulates Upon Which the Programme is Based

In recent years teacher education has received intense scrutiny in most developed countries. Teacher educators including Goodlad (1994), Tom (1997) and special interest

groups such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) have compiled statements of postulates, principles and licensure standards which may assist teacher educators in their quest for excellence. In developing their compressed programme the University of Auckland selected from a range of academic sources, but also included the opinions of practising teachers in the field.

The following five structural postulates formed the basis of the programme.

Postulate One: Course compression is possible for mature and motivated graduate student teachers.

School principals often note the difficulty newly graduated teachers have in bridging the transition from slower paced two semester academic years, described by Tom (1997) as "plodding gradualism", to the high pressure reality of a four term year of teaching. Frequent illness in the first year of teaching is often the result. His suggestion that a pre-service teacher education course for graduates should be "short in length and intense in its involvement" (p.131) may be more appropriate in a rapidly changing school system with an increased emphasis on accountability to the community. It is postulated that student teachers who are selected with, or encouraged to develop, good coping strategies and self management skills may be more suited to a compressed course which depends on these skills and better able to transfer them to the school environment.

In survey of compressed courses across New Zealand Renwick and Gray (1997) note that the introduction of compressed courses has forced providers to look again at how teacher education programmes are delivered with the result that a pool of potential teachers who would not otherwise have trained as teachers was tapped. More mature students with valuable life experience can be effective teachers but they often have difficulty leaving a job with a steady income to train for more than a year and are therefore barred from the

profession. The mean age of 30 in the University of Auckland programme is an indicator that a hitherto untapped pool of potential teachers with a wide range of background experiences, including their degree, has been attracted into the profession since the introduction of a compressed course.

The concept of teacher education as graduate level professional training (Schwartz, 1996) is now being adopted in many countries. In the New Zealand context several providers of newly developed compressed courses accept any graduate status as a pre-requisite (Renwick and Gray, 1997). Student teachers may be starting their professional training with a liberal arts degree including many papers in subjects such as Education, or a law degree with no Education papers at all. Observations of student success in passing the University of Auckland course and winning employment would indicate no link between the degree held and initial success in winning employment as a teacher.

At the end of the course a one to five scale with 1 = agree and 5 = disagree was used to evaluate whether compressed courses were too short to produce good teachers. Associate teachers (Mn=2.22), mentor teachers (Mn=2.74) and principals (Mn=3.09) showed ambivalence. Student teachers (Mn=3.80) were uncertain about their course length. Yet the student teachers from the inaugural University of Auckland compressed course were very successful in obtaining employment with those same principals, with only one student unable to find work. Several won keenly sought after positions and many were employed long before the course was completed. Winning a teaching position could be expected given a shortage of good teachers, but winning a highly contested position in a popular school may signal that the quality and preparedness of the prospective teacher, rather than the length of the course, is the measure of success.

Postulate Two: Equal partnership with schools is an essential element.

A search of the teacher education literature focussed on the move towards partnerships that was emerging in both England and the United States of America. Underlying assumptions concerning the university/school partnership included acceptance of the knowledge base resident among practitioners, the need to contextualise learning, and the understanding that knowledge about teaching is created in school settings (Levine & Trachtman, 1997).

In the University of Auckland programme on-course time is shared with student teachers spending up to 50% of their contact hours for most papers in schools under the guidance of the mentor teacher and associate teacher. Course planning and course delivery is shared with mentors supporting lectures at the university in addition to their in-school delivery. Finance is shared between university and school with the university paying for mentors and associate teachers, school overheads and release time for mentors to complete in-class observations. Governance is also shared with an advisory group of school and university personnel guiding the programme director and being represented on the university Board of Studies in Education.

Course evaluation at the end of year one using a one to five scale with 1 = agree and 5 = disagree indicated very strong support for the statement that teacher education should be a full partnership between schools and tertiary institutions (associate teacher Mn = 1.43, mentor teacher Mn = 1.23, principals Mn = 1.23, student teachers Mn = 1.30).

Postulate Three: Continuous placement in schools is preferable to block placements.

The theory / practice dichotomy has been the focus of much criticism of teacher education programmes (Eltis, 1991; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998). Occasional references to university coursework being carried out simultaneously with school placements (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996: Tom, 1997) and comments by experienced teachers in the field suggested that a continuous placement model be introduced as a fundamental

component in the University of Auckland programme with the intention that student teachers could be introduced to a concept at the university, gather data in the field and then reflect on the process, all within a calendar week. Student teachers stay at each school for a term, spending two days each week at the university and three days each week in a school with the mentor teacher linking the university and school components. An additional benefit from using this model is that student teachers spend a greater part of the school year in schools and can absorb more of the school culture, see gradual change in students and acclimatise to the rhythm of school life.

Linking the school and university programmes within each week as an alternative to the block placement model caused much comment, but a course evaluation analysis at the end of the first year of the programme showed widespread agreement with the principle. On a one to five scale with one as the most positive, associate teachers (x=1.64), mentors (Mn=1.40), principals (Mn=1.42) and student teachers (Mn=1.20) agreed that theory / practice links in traditional teacher education courses should be strengthened. They also agreed that the continuous placement model was more likely to assist student teachers to develop appropriate teaching skills over 30 weeks than less frequent block placements (associate teachers Mn=1.68, mentors Mn=1.69, principals Mn=1.54, student teachers x=1.70).

Postulate Four: Academically qualified mentor teachers in schools will enhance the quality of practicum experiences.

The importance of appropriate professional development for school staff working with student teachers is widely acknowledged (Edwards & Collison, 1996; Eltis, 1991; Feiman-Nemser & Rosaen, 1997; Levine, 1992). An essential condition for acceptance into the University of Auckland consortium of schools is nomination of a suitable mentor teacher who is willing to complete two university papers at post-graduate level covering

the skills of mentoring and knowledge of current pedagogy (Timperley & Robinson, 1998).

The perception held by many teachers that the most significant person during their pre-service course was their mentor teacher is well supported in the literature (Edwards & Collison, 1996; McIntyre, Byrd & Foxx, 1996). Indeed, most of the new approaches to teacher education examined during the establishment phase of the University of Auckland course noted the enhanced role of mentor teachers/associate teachers/co-operating teachers in the school component of the programme.

Traditionally student teachers have had to bridge the culture difference between universities and schools in teacher education programmes, often unsuccessfully (Wideen et al. 1998). In questioning this notion, the role of an additional person, the mentor (Edwards & Collison, 1996) was suggested. Mentor functions include model and interpreter, instructor and co-enquirer (Maynard & Furlong, 1993). An additional role introduced in the University of Auckland model, that of assessor, gives rise to one of the dilemmas in teacher education identified by Katz & Raths (1992), in their words the evaluative versus affective emphases. In this programme mentors are expected to provide support and encouragement to the student teachers who are with them for long periods and are also accredited to evaluate teaching practice, their evaluations being recorded as part of the student teachers' assessment. Edwards & Collison (1996) suggest that the two roles can be managed because mentors are firstly teachers who successfully cope with this dilemma on a daily basis in their classrooms and by transfer, willingly take on the same function with adult learners.

It is difficult to establish whether the tension between support and assessment is any greater in this programme than in others, but given the greater proportion of responsibility that mentors have for summative assessment than in some other programmes where classroom practice is evaluated by lecturers from the tertiary institution, it is likely to be greater. Student teachers have not expressed any concerns about the tension between the

evaluative and supportive role of mentors to date but objective research focussing on the issue is in progress under contract to the Ministry of Education.

The University expectation that mentor teachers be formally qualified in the skills of supporting student teachers was well supported in evaluative comment from school staff (associate teachers Mn=2.08, mentors Mn=1.68, principals Mn=1.65) and student teachers Mn= 1.50.

Postulate Five: Student teachers must have a range of practicum experiences likely to provide contact with a range of students.

Teaching diverse populations, particularly in urban schools, requires exposure to a variety of settings, teaching methods and school philosophies that will inform the practice of the emerging teacher (Haberman, 1996). Similarly, there is extensive research support for the notion that student teachers must have the opportunity to work with a diverse student body (Goodlad, 1994; McIntyre, Bird & Foxx, 1996) so that they can experience difference in a positive way and practice relevant skills.

In the University of Auckland programme student teachers must choose a practicum in each of high, middle and low socio-economic schools, and also at junior, middle and senior primary school age levels. Experience in several class levels (year one to eight) is designed to assist the student teacher to find the age level of students that they are most suited to teach and also help them to develop a range of teaching strategies which can be used at all class levels. Student teachers rate experiencing a range of practicum placements very highly (Mean on the same scale described earlier = 1.5).

A range of experiences implies a range of schools. Schools within the University of Auckland consortium are selected to provide a full socio-economic range, differing philosophies, varied school types and geographical coverage of the region.

Discussion

Suspicion about any attempt to shorten teacher training tends to focus on coverage and the fiscal priorities of government. Consequently a recently released green paper outlining government intentions (Ministry of Education, 1997) and signalling that compressed courses might continue in New Zealand pre-service teacher education even though the teacher shortage at primary level was waning, was treated with suspicion by some faculty and teachers. In a comparative study of 11 compressed courses throughout New Zealand Mansell, Renwick and Gray (1997) express ambivalence about their efficacy yet acknowledge that "A compressed programme was an appropriate pathway for some carefully selected students." (p. 16). Some teacher educators support the concept of compressed courses but this paper has shown that practising professionals who are involved and many student teachers express ambivalence. This ambivalence has existed since so-called 'pressure cooker' courses were introduced for New Zealand teacher training during the post World War Two baby boom period and was recently epitomised by an elderly rural principal addressing students with a statement expressing the intention never to employ anyone from a short course no matter where and with whom it was done.

Course quality is not necessarily just a product of course length (Tom, 1997). It is common for experienced teachers to complain about time wasted during their training, but also argue about the ideal length of a course. McIntyre et al. (1996) found strong evidence that quality, not length, was the determining factor in field experiences. Future discussions about course length are likely to be more productive if they also include consideration of variables such as coverage, intensity, prior knowledge of the student teachers, time in schools, professional development of school personnel, relevance of the instruction provided and the quality of the student teacher intake. It is further suggested that the individual difference we acknowledge in children should also apply to student

teachers with the clear inference that different student teachers will require different pre-service teacher education programmes.

Partnership between university and schools is widely supported both in the literature and the profession with many models of partnership, such as the North American professional development school movement (Goodlad, 1994; Levine, 1992; Levine & Trachtman, 1997), proposed to rectify the tension between the university and school components. True partnership implies sharing. More equal sharing of financial resources, governance and course management is still a desired, but theoretical goal for many initial teacher education programmes. Structural changes developed by the University of Auckland in response to requests from the profession have gone some way towards easing this important tension.

In early 1900 New Zealand teachers were inducted into the profession by becoming 'pupil teachers' and undertaking an apprenticeship with an experienced teacher. Requests from student teachers and the teaching profession for more pre-service time in schools are sometimes dismissed as re-introducing the apprenticeship model of the old days, a criticism that has also been levelled at the programme described above. The introduction of a continuous placement model to solve the theory/practice dilemma is a reasoned attempt improve the quality of the programme and must be seen in tandem with the introduction of trained mentors who deliver a course component on-site in schools. The notion receives some support from research and strong support from student teachers and school staff so cannot be dismissed. A comparative study between the continuous placement model and the block placement model will be needed to establish the veracity or otherwise of the views held by students and within schools.

The need for professional development of co-operating school staff has been documented. Completion of two relevant papers at post-graduate level as in the University of Auckland model equates to more formal professional development than many co-operating school staff have received in the past. Schools have responded enthusiastically to this notion,

some also sending other senior management to complete the two papers as professional development for appraising and managing establishment staff in schools. An unexpected concern noted in comments attached to the evaluation revealed that the expectation that the professional development provided would be passed on to associate teachers has not been achieved. The need for associate teacher professional development remains an issue in this programme and a research project sponsored by the Ministry of Education is underway to explore this aspect of the programme.

Auckland is a rapidly growing and increasingly multicultural city housing the largest aggregation of Polynesian communities in the world. Haberman (1996) notes that similar changes in urban communities across the globe mean that all student teachers must be prepared to teach in diverse urban schools, not just a selected cohort. Zeichner (1993) identifies 15 key elements, including teaching experience in a range of schools, that will more effectively prepare teachers for student diversity. Strong endorsement by student teachers for a range of practicum experiences is gratifying and has resulted in several students who would not otherwise have done so choosing to seek appointment in diverse urban schools.

Conclusion

While the end of course evaluation by student teachers, mentor teachers, associate teachers and principals of unique structural components in the University of Auckland approach to pre-service teacher education is generally favourable, opinions can change when the real world of employment in the classroom is mastered. Most of the published research concerning initial teacher education programmes involves assessment at course completion with very few studies following teachers through several years of teaching (Wideen et al., 1998). Pigge and Marso (1997) completed a seven year longtitudinal study of beginning teachers which demonstrated significant change in attitude over time.

The results ...e University of Auckland study must therefore be considered tentative until further evidence is accumulated in another longer term study presently incomplete.

On the New Zealand national scene compressed courses and new school partnerships have changed the face of teacher education within a year, perhaps irreversibly. The question remains unanswered, for better or for worse?

REFERENCES

Alton-Lee, A.; Nuthall, G. & Patrick, J. (1993). Reframing classroom research: a lesson from the private world of children. Harvard Educational Review, 63 (1), 50-84.

Berliner, D. (1987). Simple views of effective teaching and a simple theory of classroom instruction. In D. C. Beliner & B. V. Rosenshine (Eds.), Talks to teachers (pp. 93-110). New York: Random House.

Edwards, A. & Collison, C. (1996). Mentoring and developing practice in primary schools: Supporting student teacher learning in schools. United Kingdom: Open University Press.

Eltis, K. (1991). Re-shaping pre-service teacher education: Establishing a practicum-driven curriculum. Journal of Teaching Practice, 11, 1-18.

Goodlad, J. I. (1994). Educational renewal: Better teachers, better schools. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Haberman, M. (1996). Selecting and preparing culturally competent teachers for urban schools. In J. Sikula, (Ed.) Handbook of teacher education (2nd ed. pp. 747-760). New York: MacMillan.

Katz, L. G. & Raths, J. (1992). Six dilemmas in teacher education. Journal of Teacher Education: 43, 376-385.

Feiman-Nemser, S. & Rosaen, C. (Eds.). (1997). Guided teacher learning: Insider studies of classroom work with prospective and practicing teachers. Washington DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Levine, M. (Ed.). (1992). Professional practice schools: Linking teacher education and school reform. New York: Teachers College Press.

Levine, M. & Trachtman, R. (Eds.). (1997). Making professional development schools work: Politics, practice and policy. New York: Teachers College Press.

Mansell, R., Renwick, M. & Gray, A. Damned if we do and damned if we don't: dilemmas of research on contentious policy. Paper presented at the New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference, University of Auckland, December 1997.

Maynard, T., & Furlong, J. (1993). Mentoring and developing practice in primary schools. Buckingham: Open University Press.

McIntyre, D., Byrd, D., & Foxx, S. (1996). In J. Sikula (Ed.) Handbook of Teacher Education. (2nd ed. pp. 171-193). New York: MacMillan.

Ministry of Education. (1997). Review of Teacher Education in New Zealand. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.

Nuthall, G., & Alton-Lee, A. (1993). Predicting learning from student experience of teaching: a theory of student knowledge construction in classrooms. American Educational Research Journal, 30, 799-840.

Pigge, F. L., & Marso, R. N. (1997). A seven year longtitudinal multi-factor assessment of teaching concerns development through preparation and early tyears of teaching. Teaching and Teacher Education, 13:2, 225-235.

Renwick, M., & Gray, A. (1997). Compressed programmes of primary teacher education: an initial overview. A report prepared for the Teacher Registration Board. Wellington, New Zealand.

Schwartz, H. (1996). The changing nature of teacher education. In J. Sikula, Handbook of Teacher Education (2nd ed. pp.3-13). New York: MacMillan.

Sumara, D., & Luce-Kapler, R. (1996). (Un)becoming a teacher: Negotiating identities while learning to teach. Canadian Journal of Education, 22, 65-83.

Timperley, H. S. & Robinson, M. J. Promoting learning conversations between mentors and student teachers. Manuscript submitted for publication. University of Auckland.

Tom, A. R. (1997). Redesigning teacher education. San Francisco: State University of New York Press.

Wideen, M., Mayer-Smith, J. & Moon, B. (1998). A critical analysis of the research on learning to teach: Making the case for an ecological perspective on inquiry. Review of Educational Research, 68, 130-178.

Zeichner, K. (1996). Educating teachers for cultural diversity. In J. Sikula, (Ed.) Handbook of Teacher Education (2nd ed. pp.3-13). New York: MacMillan.